

COMMITTEE ON  
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INCOME SECURITY AND FAMILY SUPPORT

UNITED STATES GROUP OF THE  
NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

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January 13, 2010

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I write to you today to thank you for your swift and timely response in the aftermath of yesterday's devastating earthquake. I am certain that the quick response from our government has saved untold lives and again shows the United States to be a leader when it comes to providing assistance to our friends and allies. With this in mind, I want to respectfully request that you use any and all resources available to help the Haitian people with the recovery, stabilizing and rebuilding efforts in Haiti. In my experience, there are several specific points that will be necessary for a successful effort.

First, as efforts begin to mobilize, I want to stress the importance of using our local resources in the relief effort. To the extent that local governments volunteer their search and rescue units as well as security units to deploy to the island, I would ask that mission authorization be expedited so that this most crucial element of relief can be effectuated quickly and comprehensively.

Further, throughout South Florida, the Gulf Coast and the rest of the nation, there are specialized teams preparing to deploy to Port-au-Prince. We must also maximize usage of our local professionals – doctors, nurses, morticians, as well as other non-medical professionals - to assist with efforts. I have been in contact with local doctors and health professionals from all over Florida who are ready to fly to Haiti to provide the necessary medical support to stabilize the region. Health professionals will be particularly essential as relief efforts move from providing general health assistance to controlling the infectious diseases and mental health issues that tend surface in the aftermath of these large scale disasters. It is imperative that coordination efforts be made so that these volunteers can be guided in their attempts to provide help to our devastated neighbor.

Next, it is crucial that the United States take the lead on securing and rebuilding the primary infrastructure for Haiti's long term recovery efforts. I understand the Toussaint L'Ouverture International Airport in Port-au-prince is operational; however, I have been informed that the communications tower has collapsed and some of the

other infrastructure has not been deemed secure. Moreover, we will need the Army Corps of Engineers in efforts to build hospitals, police stations, and other essential structures necessary in providing a sense of security and social order in the immediate aftermath of this event.

Further, security and law enforcement efforts will become of paramount importance as shock turns into desperation. The United States should take the lead in coordinating efforts to ensure that lawlessness is not an added burden to the people of Haiti. In all, it will be important to ensure that linguistics experts, in French Creole specifically, be employed as often as possible. The ability to communicate to Haitians on the street quickly and efficiently as to what resources and aid are available and on the way will quell the fear and anger that these people are now suffering. In the aftermath of each of the past four hurricanes, maintaining law and order became a distinct issue after food aid and other resources were available, and we should be prepared to head off these issues to the extent possible in this instance.

Lastly, I ask that the United States take a leadership role in the coordination between the various key countries that are providing assistance on the ground in Haiti. After the hurricanes in 2008, there was a large scale effort to help Haiti that involved the European Union and several countries such as France, Canada, Brazil, and, of course, the United States. Many of these efforts, while substantial, were uncoordinated leading to many duplicative programs and efforts. Taking a leadership role, USAID should pull together their counterparts from these other countries and begin to coordinate the operations so that all our resources are used efficiently and our assistance remains impactful. I am certain that the international community will follow our lead if we are ready and willing to guide them and we will not be able to complete the task without them.

The impressive United States response to the recent devastation in Thailand is a testament to how we as American are willing to lend a hand to those in need, no matter the obstacles. In this case, Haiti, our neighbor and friend less than 600 nautical miles off of U.S. shores, is in desperate need so shortly after hurricanes laid waste to the island. We can and must do all that we can to help them. Again, I appreciate the leadership set forth by the Administrations swift response. I look forward to working with you as Congress begins to work on providing greater resources for our disaster relief efforts in Haiti.

Sincerely,



**KENDRICK B. MEEK**  
Member of Congress